

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

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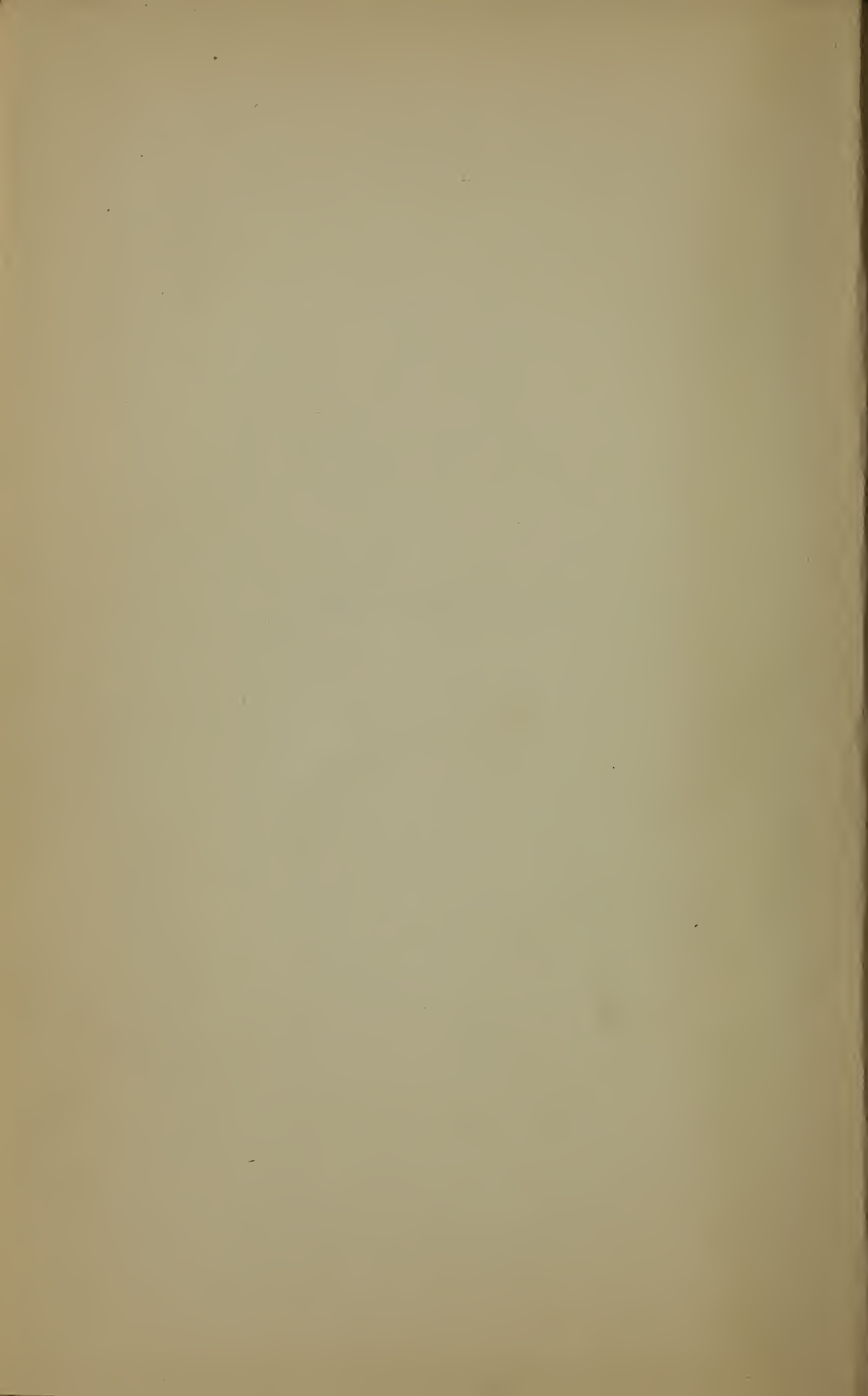
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# THE ABUNDANT LIFE



GRINNELL VESPER

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE

BY  
CHARLES NOBLE



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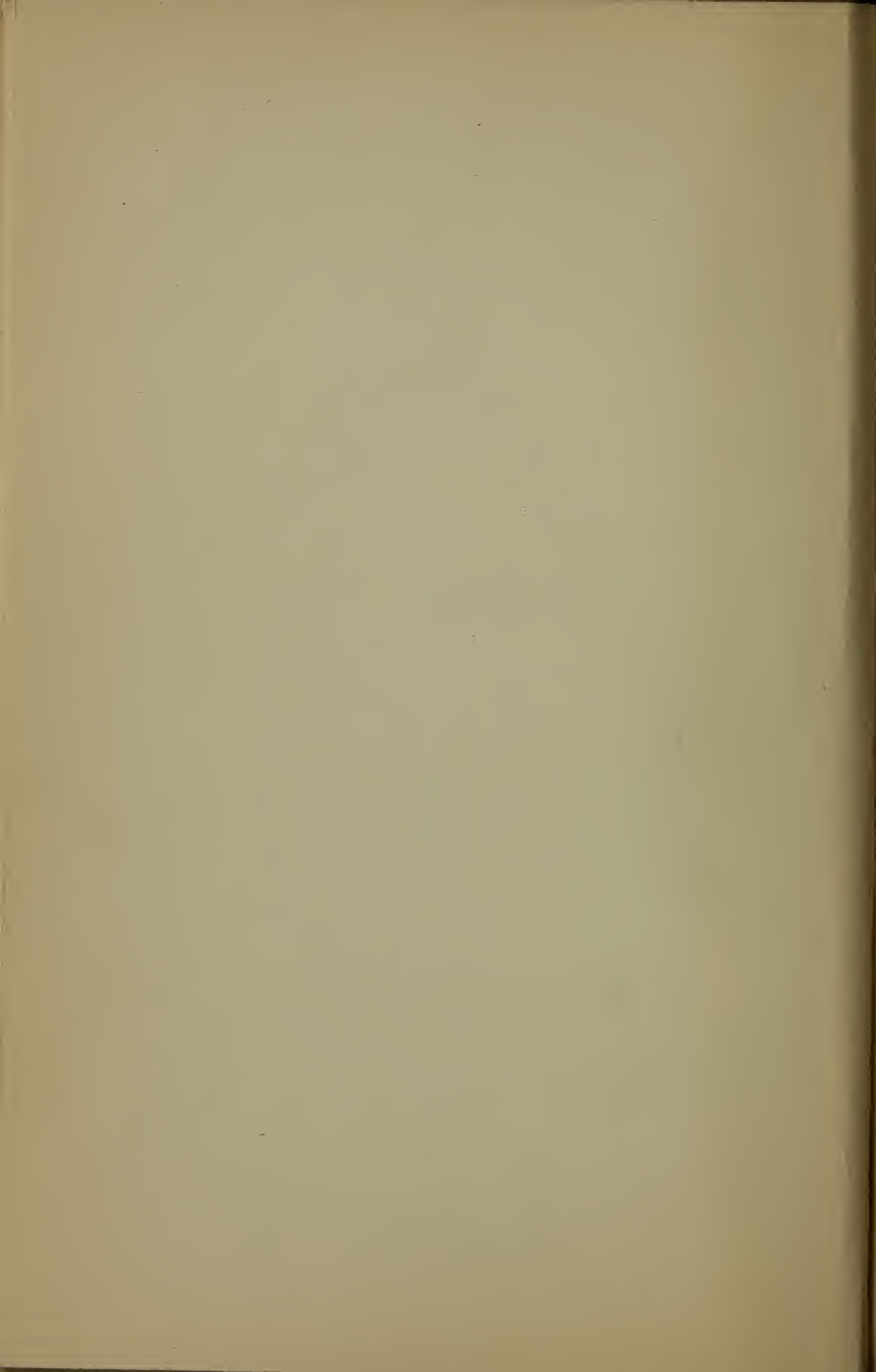
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*To My Wife*



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“I came that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly.”

—JOHN X-10.

## THE ABUNDANT LIFE

Far too much religious and moral energy is spent in restriction. Men say to themselves: I must cut off all that hinders the highest. I must not be sensual; I must not be intemperate; I must not be frivolous; I must not do this; I must not do that; and for the most part they say well. Every one of these restrictions may be necessary, but they must not absorb the energy of one's spiritual endeavor. In themselves they will never make up a religious, much less a really Christian experience. Grammatically two negatives may make an affirmative; but it is a weak affirmative, and spiritually no conceivable number of negations can make the grand affirmative which is the only possible beginning and the continual expression of the really spiritual life. The athlete must, of course, train away every ounce of superfluous flesh; must cut himself off from sweets and fats and all weakening foods and drinks; but no imaginable degree or amount

of such abstinence will win the race. What commands victory is the dogged persistence in one's best gait during the earlier stages of the race, and at the critical moment bringing into action every ounce of energy. Jesus doubtless emphasized the negative side when he told us to pluck out or cut off the offending eye or arm; but note the order of his words in the statement of what is necessary in order to discipleship. "If any man would be my disciple let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." The denial, the cross, are conditions necessary and precedent; but the crowning emphasis is on the last words "follow me." That is the real life; the other is important only in order to that. The denial, the negation, is the narrow gate; the way, reaching on and on through existence, that is positive life. What Jesus came for is not ultimately, though it may be primarily, to have us enter through the gate. That of course is necessary; but it is only in order to our traveling on in the way. "I came," he said, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." "Over and above," "more than enough," would be fair alterna-

tive renderings of the words. Instead of a narrowed, limited, restricted life, as religion is too often conceived, Christ's idea for men is a life overflowing, rich, full, large, strong; in a word, abundant.

Life is a vague term and its four letters veil an unsolved mystery. No scientist's analysis has yet discovered its secret; no philosopher's speculation has yet discovered its meaning. Yet it is the commonest of all common possessions, and while we may not define it or explain it, we know it, and we can test its fulness or its narrowness by the study of its familiar characteristics. One element of life certainly is knowledge. The dead or the unborn know nothing. The infant knows little, the babe knows a little more, the child more, the youth more, the full grown man should know yet more. Abundance of life may be partly tested, then, by abundance of knowledge; and we ask, how does the Christ life answer to that test? It is true that knowledge of a certain sort is characteristic of the life of the world, as distinguished from the Christ life. "The children of this world," said Jesus, "are wiser in their generation (after their fashion, or in



their way?), than the children of light." There is a sort of knowledge of life which the so-called "man-of-the-world" has in a special degree; but it is a narrow and a narrowing type of knowledge. The last newspaper sensation in the scandal world illustrates this sort of knowledge; and from it we may well pray "Good Lord deliver us." Christ surely draws away from the knowledge of vice to the knowledge that maketh pure, but that is just another way of saying that the Christ brand of knowledge is more abundant than the other.

The Christ man, as such, has abundant knowledge of nature. He has no right to take narrow views of the garment of his God, of the revelation of the power of Him who has revealed the secret of life; and that is a part of the Christ idea of nature. Advancement in the knowledge of nature is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Christian nations, and should be characteristic of every Christian soul. Our Master bids us consider the lilies; and the spirit of that lesson leads us into all the mysteries of creation. It is wonderful how Jesus has written his name in all the forms and forces of the material world,

and so, invites those who love him to know them. If we look up into the sky at night we remember him who taught us to pray "Our Father in the heavens." Every star that shines may stand to us for the star of Bethlehem. At sun-rise we think of his command that we be like our Father, who maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and the good. The grass of the field, with its blooming dandelions and daisies always calls to mind his warning that we be not anxious about raiment. He has made the water of every spring or fountain to sparkle for us as the eternal symbol of spiritual life. He has glorified even the sparrow, as he compels us to remember that not one of them shall fall to the ground without our Father, The poetic knowledge of nature, then, the "light that never was on sea or land," that most precious gift of genius, Christ opens to every believing soul. This world of nature was his home; he dwelt in it, the years he spent on earth; and so he wins men to its study, and makes the very leaves and drops and pebbles sacred, because parts of his Father's house.

No less does the Christ life mean abundance in the scientific knowledge of nature. The

student of Physics, or of Botany or Chemistry or Zoology should have no quarrel with the belief of the Christian. Should have? he has no such quarrel. His Christian faith, if it be really Christian at first hand, and not diluted or perverted, makes him the better able to observe, to receive, to believe the truth. The scientific spirit is essentially the Christian spirit; for it is essentially truth loving, truth seeking, patient, humble, unselfish, pure. In spite of some noisy assertions to the contrary, really scientific men are essentially Christian; and it is no accident, but arises from the very necessity of the case that all great advances in scientific knowledge of nature have been under Christian influences, in Christian nations, among Christian men.

Again, Christ brings us into touch with man as well as nature. He is himself the ideal man. Knowing him you know man as God made him and meant him to be. With the spirit of Christ moving your spirit, you will also come to know your fellow man as you could not without that spirit. Here, again, observed fact accords with theory. The comparative study of religions makes much of Ethnic ideas,



dividing mankind into nations and races. The Study of the Christ teaching takes us through these Ethnic outside qualities to the inward humanity. Christ seems to have thought very little about his nation or about other nations. His concern seems to have been almost altogether with man as man. So the Christ life may be consistent with a true patriotism as with a true family and neighborly love, and a true self respect; but it can never be confined within these boundaries, and always goes out after the man. Hence the Christian knows no class, no race, no distinction whatever. Doubtless individuals and churches have failed lamentably to measure up to this universality. Yet, with all its failings, the Church of Christ is the one institution on earth which makes absolutely no distinction among men. Men, women, children, rich, poor, barbarian, Scythian, bond, free: they are all there; and the individual or the congregation which falls below this ideal and narrows itself to class or race or nation, is a confessed defaulter to the Christ ideal. So the Christian must know his fellow man; and the Christian life, even in its imperfect realization, brings man to wider know-

ledge of his brother man than has been ever approached apart from Christ.

The Christ life is abundant in the highest knowledge of all, the knowledge of God. "This is life eternal," says John, giving us his understanding of the teaching of the Master, "that ye may know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Knowledge is of the very essence of life. When you cease to know you cease to live; and life complete and perfect, life at its climax, is knowledge at its climax, the knowledge of God. The Christ life calls you to this knowledge. The simplest minded Christian, he who has least of what is ordinarily called knowledge, has this advantage over the wisest agnostic. He knows God. Herein he has life, and has it abundantly.

Life, if complete, must add to knowledge, action; and the Christ life means abundance of activity. They utterly misread the Master's message who took it to mean that they might escape the temptations of the world by hiding in caverns or standing upon pillars, doing nothing all their days. No less did they mistake who in days of persecution rushed upon martyrdom, seeking death for the sake of Christ.

True, he said that he who would lose his life for his sake should find it. True it is better to die as to the body than to slay the soul by unfaithfulness, by yielding to the selfish and bestial impulses of the flesh. Realizing the truth and importance of all this it remains unquestionable that Christ's command is to life and to the life of action, rather than the life of repose. Repose, for him, meant action. In that sweet invitation which has come like the even-song bell to weary spirits in all ages: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," the call is indeed to rest, to soul rest; but how is that rest to be gained? The music of the blessed words flows on: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." The yoke is a tool for action too strenuous for any single life. By the help of the yoke you may carry more and pull harder than would be possible without. There is no better realization of the strenuous life, as there is no better realization of the simple life, than in the life that Christ gives to man. Simple in the unity of its purposes, in the straightforward directness of its motives, it is strenuous in the multiplicity of its opportunities and the stringency of its demands.

Richer, fuller, with wider contact, with mightier influence in all directions than any other life, the Christ life bids you be and do the very highest, best and most that is possible to your nature. Sin is always crippling, limiting, hindering. Unbelief makes advance, adventure, discovery impossible. He has the strength of ten whose heart is pure. He has a power otherwise undreamed of who has the Christ motive pushing him into action. Christian activity knows no limitation of natural inertia; for it is inspired by Him who is the central dominant force within and behind all natural forces. Christian activity knows no limitation of nation or race or language. It belts the globe with its mission stations; it teaches the nations with its Bible translated into every tongue. Christian activity knows no limitation of human weakness. It is of the spirit and acts upon the spirit of man. The Christian comes into the broadest and the highest sphere of activity possible. Christ came that he might have the life of action, and that he might have it abundantly.

Knowledge and action spell character. Knowledge forms character; action expresses



character. The life that Christ came to give may be viewed in the aspect of character; and here again it is true that the Christ character is that of which we may most accurately use the word abundant. The Christian character is in its essence broad and full; the common conception of a Christian as typically a narrow limited sort of being is a radically false idea. Doubtless many narrow, limited persons are Christians. We have all known them; some of us are they. We have no very great abundance in our characters, some of us must sadly confess; but that is because our Christianity is of a very imperfect sort. We have it, and so far as we really do have it, it broadens us, deepens us, fills us more and more abundantly. Though it is not yet very abundant in us; though we must confess ourselves to be sadly limited, yet the broadest, most abundant phase of our character is our Christianity. So there are doubtless men and women of many sided ability, of wide knowledge, of intense activity, of pure, strong, lovable moral character, whom we could not honestly call Christians. But their lack of the distinguishing Christian quality narrows and limits them. They would be

broader, stronger, more abundant personalities if they had the Christ spirit, if they had received the life which he came to give. Consider the life of him who gives us life. Think how abundant in knowledge, how abundant in action, how abundant in character was the life of Jesus. If we will take him as our life, bring ourselves up close to him, let his spirit rule our spirits, our lives shall be broader, deeper, higher, more abundant.

This abundance of life which Christ gives contains in itself the assurance of immortality. To be sure, abundance of life is a matter of quality rather than of quantity. Continuance is not the essential thing. A twenty year life on earth with fulness, with consecration, is more abundant than a century of worldliness. That to be sure; but it is inconceivable that the life which Jesus came to give should be annihilated by the physical incident that men call death. It is not conceivable that the life of Jesus ceased when his heart broke on the cross. It is not conceivable that the life which has the Christ quality should cease because the blood ceases to course through the body. The essential matter is the quality of life rather

than its quantity. Yes! but that quality of spiritual reality, of purity, of Christlikeness, carries with it the assurance that it shall not cease. Some recent psychologists question individual immortality because recent psychology has fixed its attention upon the brain and the nerves which perish when the body dies. But because certain investigators fail to find the immortal spirit in the brain and nerve tissues, it hardly follows that the immortal spirit does not exist. No thinker ever really believed that the spirit of man could be discovered by the microscope, or could be identified with brain and nerve reactions. Ah! No! We have brain and nerves for purposes of thought, feeling and will. We are spirits, in the image of God; and he who came that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly is he who said; "I am the resurrection and the life. He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

— ROMANS, XII.-I



## THE REASONABLE LIFE

It has become one of the commonplaces, those precious commonplaces, like love, friendship, truth and kindness, that the "Grinnell spirit" means service. The readiness to give our lives freely for the help of our fellows, service to the College, on the field of athletics, in the society, in the class room, in any and all possible phases of college life, that is our old time long recognized test of true college spirit. The "kicker," the "knocker," the critic of unkindly spirit we refuse to consider a true Grinnell man. The spirit of fellowship, the unity of interest, the consciousness that we all, alumni, trustees, officers, faculty, students, constitute one solid body, with a real organic unity of life, made up of individuals who will yield individual interest to the common interest, who will work together in any reasonable manner or method that the common good may demand; this is what we mean by the "Grinnell spirit."

Now the moment we bring this conception of the "Grinnell spirit" into comparison with the Christian spirit we notice that the two are essentially one. What the Christ spirit asks is precisely this ideal of fellowship in service and service in fellowship. When the disciples of Jesus were disputing among themselves which should be greatest, the Master took a napkin, and girded himself, and washed the disciples' feet. He said "Behold, I am among you as he that serveth." He said, "He that would be great among you, let him be servant of all." Service was the ideal of Christ. Service was what he came to offer to man. Service was what he demanded of men. He sent out his followers to service. He trained them to service. He bound them together in the fellowship of the Church for service. They were to be ready to give their lives for their fellow men; to die if necessary, but at any rate to live for their fellow men. They were to be willing to put this ideal first in their lives; to leave home, friends, father, mother, all sweetest and strongest ties of nature and of habit, to fulfill this service. His call was to fling one's life against the evil forces of the world,

to sink one's own interests in devotion to the Divine ideal; to give one's self with entire surrender to the work of building men up in the highest life.

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This is perhaps the hardest of the hard sayings of the Master. He said it when "great multitudes were following him." It was the challenge which he flung in the faces of the fickle crowd, who were drawn to him by his miracles and by the grace and wonderful beauty of his teachings. It was the strongest of those biting, testing words by which he deliberately wrecked his popularity and made sure his crucifixion. But, allowing for the paradox in the form of the statement, these words just put into the strongest possible language the idea which underlies our commonplace of the "Grinnell spirit," the idea, namely, that private interests, private prejudices, private affections, even, must yield to the general good; that a life self centred is a life sure to fail; that true success is found and is found only in the will-

ing surrender of all our powers to the supreme ideal of service. A man can not be a true "Grinnell man," a woman can not have the true Grinnell spirit, then, unless that man and that woman have in their hearts the Christ ideal, and show by word and deed that they are following the light of that ideal.

We can not give this ideal of Christian living fair consideration without realizing that it is a perfectly reasonable ideal. It is no dream of the mystic, fit food for fancy, portraying an ideal which can be realized only in a spiritual world. It is, on the contrary, a strictly scientific philosophy of human life, to be lived among men just as we know men to be, to be squared with just such circumstances as those familiar to our every day experience. The self-centered life is the unreasonable life. The Christian life, the life of service, is the reasonable life. There is a very common fashion of talking as if the unselfish ideals of Christ were unpractical, not to be lived in the every day world, possible of realization only in an imagined Eutopia, or in that future life to which we look forward, when the spirit shall be free from the bonds of the flesh. In



truth, however, the unselfish man, living for the ideals of Christian service, is the only really reasonable, practical man.

This appears clearly when we consider that he alone among men faces the real facts of life, and especially the ugly fact of human sinfulness and his own actual moral and spiritual condition. The soul that has not made the Christian decision lives in a sort of fool's paradise. He dreams that he can carry out his own self centered scheme of life without regard to the forces of evil that actually exist and dominate so large a part of the real world. He tells himself that he is about as good as other men, and that other men are about as good as they can be expected to be, and that he and they alike can go on through life, living about as they now live, leaving sin out of the calculation, and, when the evening of their life shall come, be satisfied. The soul that makes the Christian decision, putting foremost in his life Christ's ideal, faces the grim fact of sin. He recognizes his own need of a saviour from sin. He recognizes the power of evil in the world about him. He has his eyes open to the great grim fact of

evil in the world; and so, as a reasonable being, he takes account of the actual opposition, both within and without, which he will have to face in putting his ideal into his life.

The reasonable quality of the Christ life appears again, from the fact that it and it alone recognizes and uses the one supreme moral force in the universe. There is really no question among thoughtful men that the life and character, if not the death and resurrection of Jesus, constitute the great moral force of the world's history. Yet those who count themselves and are counted by many of their fellows shrewd, practical men of business try to live their lives without that moral force. The great world of politics and statesmanship blunders along with such infinite loss and damage, largely because it so completely ignores the one great spiritual force that counts in the universe. The nations waste uncounted treasures of wealth in military and naval expenditures, in futile and costly methods of government; they are wasting now uncountable treasures of human life in war; and practical men, so called, sanction this folly of waste and wickedness of carnage, and sneer at

peace men as unpractical. In fact the most practical thing, the most reasonable thing, the nations of the world today could do would be to cease the waste of human life, to come to an agreement to build no more battle ships and organize no more armies, to make the Hague tribunal a real international court, and bring all their disputes before that court for settlement. The nations will come to that practical, reasonable course when they really take Christ the great spiritual force of the universe for the guide of their counsels, for the ruler of their measures.

Just as true is it of the individual that a reasonable decision as to life will put him in touch with the one spiritual force which has in it the real power of an endless life. You want to live right. You say, my friend, that you are trying to live right. You will not say that you are succeeding in the effort; but admit that thus far your life is not a great success. You know that there is in the history of mankind one life that is ideal, that there is one being who has lived as you and I know that we ought to live, of whom one can never say that in anything he could have been better than he was. This is a

fact of history which practically no one doubts. We can go nowhere else for the ideal of human living, and going there for that ideal we find it. Now, then, the absolutely reasonable thing for you to do is to bring your life into touch with that life.

Another fact is equally beyond dispute. The purest, best lives of men in history are those lives which have come nearest to the Christ. The Christ life is not merely an ideal; it has been realized in individuals, not in any one completely, but in many partially, in some with wonderful sweetness and power. The highest, purest, sweetest lives we know in history are those which have drawn their power of living from Jesus. Then yet more emphatically we may say that the absolutely reasonable thing for me and for you, is to bring our lives into vital relations with that life which has had, in the past, such power to make the spirits of men great and pure.

Just as true is it of the present as of the past that the one spiritual force which counts most is the Christ spirit. It is the Christ spirit which sent Harry Lauder into the trenches to sing courage into the hearts of the "Tommies"



and heal his own spirit sore from the loss of his only son. It is the Christ spirit which shines through the lines of that wonderful record called "Soldiers of France." It is the Christ spirit ultimately which is responsible for the organization and work of the "Red Cross," and absolutely for all the world wide and inestimable service of the Young Men's and the Young Women's Christian Associations. In our own day, as in past days, the Christ ideal is inspiring men and women all around the world in beautiful service of their fellow men.

Come closer to your own lives. Your sweet mothers, your brave fathers, did they not gather their sweetness and their courage from their fellowship with the Christ? The good and pure and strong spirits of your acquaintance, those who have brought before you the ideal of the highest living, have they not been filled with the Christ spirit? Has not the Master spoken to you through them? Have they not walked with him? The best life that we know anything about, the purest characters we know among men, the good men, the good women of our acquaintance, are they not

the men of God, the women of Christ? Is it not then the reasonable thing for you and me, that we should bring ourselves close to that life which shows, today, such power to transform, purify, and energize the lives of the men and women whom we know?

Bringing the thought squarely against our individual life, it follows from these considerations that the service of Christ is your reasonable service, with the emphasis on "your." It is reasonable not only in general; it is reasonable in particular. It is good not only for Paul, Luther, Wesley, Moody; it is good for us today. It is good not only for your mother, father, sister, friend; it is good for you. A young man said to me once, that he could not see that "being a Christian" could make any difference in his life. He thought he was trying to live right, and if he called himself a Christian still all he could do would be to try to live right. That sounded plausible; but notice how the fallacy crept in, in the identification of "being a Christian" with "calling himself a Christian." To be sure it might not make any difference to call him-

self a Christian, though there is a strong if somewhat subtle influence in what we call ourselves; but to be a Christian would surely make a difference. That soul needed the power of the Christ life to give it a true life. You need the power of the Christ life to lift your ideal to the level of His. You are not so perfect, not so free from all forms of evil—one may say this much boldly of any man—but that you personally need exactly what the definite decision for Christ will give you.

It is your reasonable service because your conscience approves it. I have yet to meet the man or woman who on principle objects to the Christian life. I have talked with a good many who, for one supposed reason or another, told me that they did not count themselves as Christians; but with absolutely no exception they say that it is right, they profess to be glad that others are making the decision; they would say that it is good for the community to have the ideal of Christian living brought to the attention of the people; but they were not ready to make that ideal their own. Is not such an attitude essentially unreasonable?

Is it not the reasonable thing to accept for one's own life that which conscience approves, and reject what conscience condemns?

It is yours because it is within your reach. You can make it actually yours; therefore it is potentially yours. You have a right to it, and should exercise that right. This Christian ideal of service is not something far away, remote from your knowledge and experience, which has to be brought to you at great labor and pains. "Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend up into heaven? (That is to bring Christ down) or who shall descend into the abyss, (that is to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." The Christ ideal is close to you; a matter of every day living; something that is actually within your reach this very hour.

Thus, when the invitation and the impulse come to us to make a definite decision for Christ, the reasonable thing is to accept the invitation, to yield to the impulse, without regard to the doctrinal or rhetorical form in



which the matter is presented. I suppose there could hardly be a greater contrast in these superficial matters than that between John the Baptist and Jesus. John was an ascetic; Jesus ate and drank as did others of his time. John lived a hermit life in the wilderness; Jesus lived a social life among his fellows. But John was preaching repentance and righteousness, and the first public act of the life of Jesus was to enroll himself among the followers of the Baptizer. John himself perceived a sort of incongruity in the situation and hesitated to baptize the Master, but Jesus said—and the words are pregnant with meaning for all time—“Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” It is a reasonable thing for a man to put himself squarely where he belongs; to declare himself on the side that his inmost soul assures him is the right side.

Again, it is reasonable to yield to the impulse which bids us to take a definite step in the direction of the higher life because the coming of that impulse may be a divinely given opportunity, and the suppression of such an

impulse may be the final refusal of the soul to embrace the opportunity.

“Once to every man and nation comes the  
moment to decide,  
In the strife with Truth and Falsehood  
for the good or evil side.”

Lowell was doubtless thinking of things other than the choice between the Christian life and that of the Christless world; yet the one involves the other. The vision of something better than we have before experienced, and the impulse to make a step forward in our inner life; these, in whatever form they come, are priceless opportunities, and their coming makes a critical moment. When they come in the vision of the Christ and the impulse to make him your ideal and his life your life, beware how you let the opportunity pass or suppress the impulse;

“And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow the gleam.”



“Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”

— JOEL II-28.

“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”

— ACTS XXVI-19.



## THE LIFE OF VISION

There are dreams and dreams. There are visions and visions. The words are used rather indiscriminately in our Bible; yet a distinction can be discerned, though not always consistently observed. In the majority of the passages in the original the dream is more associated with sleep and inertia, the vision with sight and action. Dreams are more often spoken of in a slighting manner, though even visions are sometimes deprecated. There is basis, in the Scripture treatment of the subject, for the common suspicion, to put it mildly, we feel as to the dreamer or the visionary. For example, in Deuteronomy: "You shall not hearken to that dreamer of dreams"; and in Jeremiah: "Hearken not to your prophets, diviners, dreams, soothsayers, sorcerers," where the prophet and the dream are found in questionable company. So in Ecclesiastes, the Old Testament book of common sense: "For a dream cometh with a multitude of business;

and a fool's voice with a multitude of words." Jeremiah breathes a high scorn of the dreamer when he gives out the Lord's word as follows: "I have heard what the prophets have said that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed; which think to cause my people to forget, by their dreams." On the other hand the vision and dream are both recognized as true means of communion with God, in a striking passage in the book of Numbers: though even here it is suggested that there may be a better way: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all mine house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches."

These, however, are exceptional passages, and serve only to remind us to be on our guard against the counterfeit, and not to mistake the lesser for the greater. Every true prophet was a dreamer of dreams. The great messages of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel open with wonderful visions of the divine presence; and they with all the minor (so called) prophets are full of

dreams and visions. The words of Joel are just in line with the general course of the Old Testament message. As he thinks of the day of universal prophecy, of the gift of the divine spirit to all, he can express it only in the words: "Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." The Gospel story is keyed to the same note. Joseph and Mary lived a dream life in those wonderful days just before the Christ came. To Peter on the house top at Joppa, to Paul on the Damascus road, to Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom, to John on Patmos; to all of these came visions, and the visions were the dynamic impulse to which we owe all we have of Christian faith and life.

In truth nothing is more real in life than some of these experiences we call dreams or visions. Perhaps, at their best, they are breakings through of the real. Perhaps, compared with these true visions what we call waking reality is the dream. A bit of fugitive verse by some unknown writer haunts my memory: "This world I deem but a beautiful dream." It associates itself with Shelley's line in the *Adonais*: "He hath awakened from the dream

of life," and with the hope of the Psalmist: "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Perhaps, when we awake, we shall realize that our visions were the most real experiences of our earth life. Whether objective or subjective, whether they come to us from the impact of other spirits, of the spirit of God upon our spirits, or whether they arise from our own desires, sensations, hopes, fears; in any case they are real, tremendously real. From them arise the most important experiences, the most worth-while efforts of all our lives. The dream comes, vague, indefinite, perhaps in sleep, perhaps in waking meditation. It crystallizes in a vision; then by long planning and perhaps by hard toil it is wrought out into achievement. If there is no dream or vision, life is a mere round of meaningless work, an existence rather than a living. "When there is no vision the people perish" is a true saying, whether spoken of the individual, the nation, or of humanity.

There comes to mind another bit of fugitive rhyme which fits this thought as it applies to the individual life:



When a boy is ten, his dream is a knife;  
When he is twenty, his dream is a wife;  
From thirty to fifty, 'tis business and strife;  
From fifty to seventy 'tis a quiet life.

As the dream, so the achievement. He was a wise man who warned us "You had better be very careful what you wish for; you are so liable to get it." It would surprise some of us, especially the discontented ones who feel as if life had failed to give them their desires, if we could see how closely our actual place and lot in life corresponds to the real enduring wish. We fancy we would like some things which we do not in our souls desire, and these fancies are not likely to be realized in experience; but what we really desire, what we dream of, what forms itself in visions, we are most apt to achieve. Consider your rich man; the one who has achieved wealth; you will find in the vast majority of cases that wealth has been his dream. Life has visualized itself to him in terms of money success, and that vision has been wrought out to realization by his life effort.

The vision which comes to realization is



an exclusive vision. It does not deserve the name unless it fills the field of the soul. In this sense it is true that, according to the old proverb, there are three ways of achieving wealth, or making money, as the saying is: patrimony, matrimony, or parsimony. The first two may be disregarded, for they are comparatively rare and not important. Inherited wealth is soon dissipated; it is never retained unless the "vision" also is inherited; and if the wealth gained by matrimony is a permanent possession it is because in this case also the vision is the money-vision. Either of these implies "parsimony," not in the sense of miserliness, necessarily; but in the sense of excluding other aims and purposes. Set your heart on riches, young man, and you will probably get riches. So is the world organized. You will have to pay the price, however, and that price will be the exclusion from your life of the other visions. If you marry wealth, you are not likely to marry love. The dream of the money getter will not dwell in the same soul with "love's young dream." So is it with the vision of political power, of social success, of sensual enjoyment. He who has the vision

will achieve the realization; but at the cost of the other possible visions of the soul.

We are not helpless in this matter. The child may be tormented by bad dreams; but they are to a great extent the result of too many green apples or similar indiscretions. The man may also be tempted and distracted by unwelcome day dreams, suggestions of evil coming from evil influences "earthly, sensual, devilish," but if they crystallize in visions having power to affect the purposes and plans of life, it is because the will chooses to have it so. Your dreams and visions will correspond closely to your chosen pursuits and subjects of thought. There is a reflex action here. It may be hard sometimes to determine whether the vision is the cause of the action, in any particular case, or whether a previous course of action has brought this particular vision into the soul. In either case, the will is partly responsible. If the vision comes from the already developed purpose and plan of life, it acts as an inspiring force to aid in carrying that purpose and plan into action. If it comes from an influence outside of ourselves, either beside us, or from below, or from above, the

question at once arises whether it is a vision to be welcomed and obeyed or to be rejected and banished. We are not the victims of our visions. Rather are they ministers of evil or of good to our souls. Even the vision of the glorified Christ shining down upon Paul from the intolerable glare of the eastern sun on the Damascus road, had no irresistible compelling power. It was because Paul could say in his soul, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" that it became the inspiring force of his marvellous career. So we may gain a two-fold practical lesson from the thought of these dreams and visions as related to our individual lives; to cultivate such pure, true thoughts and habits of life as will tend to the development of high and pure visions; and when the lower vision comes, to be sure that we reject and rid ourselves of the impure, the earthly or the devilish; and that when the heavenly vision comes, we do not fail to know it and be not disobedient.

The world has been vitally influenced for weal and woe by certain great visions of national destiny and purpose which have arisen in the souls of statesmen. The men of 1776

had the vision of freedom. It dawned upon them in the form of independence from the arbitrary rule of the mother country. In some of them it broadened into the vision of a land of freemen, at first of free white men, or perhaps free men of English descent; then it broadened into a vision of freedom for black and white alike, a vision not yet perfectly realized; then as the rush of immigration came from all races of the earth, the vision has arisen in some hearts, of freedom for all Americans, democracy, government of the people by the people, for the people, in America, for those who shall become Americans as well as those who are born Americans. Our President seems to have caught a broader vision yet: "We ask nothing for America that we do not ask for all humanity"; "Making the world safe for Democracy"; these are phrases that seem to grow from a vision of a world in which nations dwell together as brothers. Has the nation as a whole caught a glimpse of such a vision as this? In the seventeenth century English statesmen gained a vision of world wide commerce, and dominion of the seas; and English politics has been working out



that vision ever since. Of late there seem to be signs that English statesmanship has gained a higher, broader vision, of free government given to all peoples, and commercial intercourse with all on the basis of equality of advantage. Will the nation be great enough to realize that vision? In the eighteenth century France got the vision of liberty, equality, fraternity; and French history since has been the struggle, with varying results, and often seeming to fall back into dreams of Empire and materialistic prosperity, but on the whole pressing forward, for the realization, in national life, of that vision. In the nineteenth century, Germany got its vision of national unity and efficiency, and wrought it out to a splendid degree of realization; but the other vision of world domination seems about to blot out the former, purer dream.

So we might go on expressing our conceptions of the meaning of historical movements in terms of this conception of national visions and their attempted realization; and doubtless our conclusions would vary according to the visions of human progress which fill our imaginations. The general truth however re-



mains indisputable, that humanity has moved forward in its weary march through the centuries, guided and inspired by the visions which have filled the imaginations of its great leaders. Forward, I say? Some of these visions have led forward, some backward, some across the main road. On the whole we can see that the enduring forward movement has been guided and inspired by three great visions, and in the long sweep of history I think we can see these visions plainly realizing themselves in the development of political and social institutions and customs.

There is the vision of freedom from political tyranny; this is what has made parliamentary, representative government, which has brought to pass the great republics of America, France, China, Russia, the representative, parliamentary monarchies of England and Italy, which seems certain to sweep all autocracies into the dust heap of national politics. There is the vision of freedom from industrial tyranny, not nearly so far advanced toward realization, but already having accomplished the destruction of slavery in civilized communities, at least of slavery as

a recognized form of industrial organization; already having built up the magnificent system of organized labor, now at last under stress of war conditions recognized by all civilized governments as a power to be counted on, to be respected, to be employed for governmental ends. There is, again, the dream of absolute equality of opportunity in life, yet very vaguely conceived, yet perhaps but a miscellaneous mass of inchoate dreams, but sure to crystallize into a vision which shall guide and inspire the political and social builders of institutions in the coming centuries.

In every generation, since Jesus gave his message, there have been mighty souls who have had and cherished the vision which passes and includes all of these: the vision of the Kingdom of God. Each great spirit which saw the vision saw it in different form. Augustine, with his imagination formed by his reverence for the wonderful government of Rome, called it the City of God. The little known, but wonderfully suggestive thinker of the nineteenth century in America, Elisha Mulford, called it the Republic of God. Our versatile, brilliant, shallow, but intensely interesting

thinker of the twentieth century, Wells, has caught a one-sided glimpse of it, and shouts out exultantly his discovery of a secret that has been open to the real Christian for twenty centuries, the secret of "God the invisible King." But, never mind; doubtless it is new to Mr. Wells, and doubtless through him the secret may be revealed to those who would never receive it from an old fashioned believer in Christ.

The kingdom of God! It was the dream of John the Baptist. Jesus began his ministry, preaching "The kingdom of God is at hand." More than any other one phrase this phrase permeates his teaching. Solve the secret of the meaning of this, and you have interpreted the message of the Master. The first Christians dared to defy the Empire of the Cæsars because they believed that they were citizens of the kingdom of God. Was it in their mind a kingdom to be found in the other life, beyond the grave, or a kingdom to be set up on earth? Words have been multiplied by the thousand in the discussion of this question; but the answer must be, both. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you, or among

you"; but Jesus also said, "many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." The martyrs rushed gladly upon death because to them death was the entrance into the kingdom of heaven; and I do not believe that they were disappointed.

The kingdom of God is wherever the will of God rules: in the soul of the believer, and in any group of sincere believers here on earth; in a glorious realization, when freed from the bonds of mortality, among the redeemed spirits of the other world, where are the many mansions; and is to come to a complete fulfillment in answer to the agelong prayer, "Thy kingdom come," in the world of freedom, brotherhood, democracy toward which the human family on earth is slowly but surely pushing its way. So if the dream of God's kingdom comes to you with the thought of death, or in the hour of the death agony, cherish it, believe it, for it shall not fail you; if it come in the stress of your every day work, in your hope for a better relation between worker and employer, of a community free from the saloon; of a city honestly governed for the best interests of its citi-



zens; of a state, a nation, a world, in which "reason and the will of God" prevail; cherish that vision; realize it, bit by bit, little by little, never despairing; for it surely is God's will, and will prevail. And, best of all for the individual soul, remember the old saying: "My mind to me a kingdom is," and make that kingdom, of your own spiritual experience, the kingdom of God.

The dreams and visions of the prophets which visualized their conception of the ideal divine-human life for man were concretely realized in the person of Jesus Christ. After that presence was taken from men by the crucifixion, the vision of the Christ came to take its place. First, closely related to the old bodily life in those visions of the resurrection days, at the tomb to the women, in the upper chamber to the eleven, on the Emmaus road to the two, by the lake shore to the fishermen, on the Galilee mountain to the five hundred. Then it came more completely freed from the limitations of the flesh, to Stephen at the hour of his death, to Saul on the Damascus road, to John on Patmos. Since then, through all the ages the vision has come to the souls of the lov-



ers of the Christ, the ancient saints, the medieval mystics. Has it ceased to come to men, in these days of cold scientific dogmatism? No, it still comes, in the meditations of the spirit, in the sacred hours of grief, in the moments of exalted purpose, of high endeavor, of consecration. Cometh it to you, my brother, my sister? Drive it not away by cold sceptical inquiry. Take yourself at your best and highest. Let the Christ into your heart, into your life. Cherish the vision, and make it real in your life.



“Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth.”

— JEREMIAH V-1.

“Quit you like men, be strong.”

— FIRST CORINTHIANS XVI-13.

“Behold the man.”

— JOHN XIX-5.

## THE MANLY LIFE

There were doubtless plenty of male featherless bipeds walking about the streets and loafing in the open places of Jerusalem that day. I suppose it would have been impossible for Jeremiah to walk a block without running against a man in the common sense of the word. Plainly what he wanted was something different from this. Most languages have two words for the idea which in English is covered by the one word "man." Latin had, besides "homo" which stood for man in general with no suggestion as to character, "vir," the root of our "virile" and "virtue," which implied the quality expressed by our adjective "manly." Greek had a similar distinction between "anthropos" and "aner": the former showing its meaning in the technical word "anthropology," which would include the man nearest to the ape as well as the man but little lower than the angels, the latter showing its force most vividly in the appeal of Paul to the Corinthians "Quit ye like

men," which in the original is one word, "andrize~~the~~," "Be men." There is a corresponding usage in Hebrew; and the word here is the one which has the same connotation as Latin "vir" and Greek "aner" and English "manly."

What Jeremiah sent out his search party for was a man in the high ethical sense of the word, some one who really deserved to be called by that high name. He went first among the poor, and then among the great and rich, but found no man in either class. What God looks for in humanity is just this quality of "manliness," just that which our nature as human beings demands that we should be. No more than this, no less than this. It will be well worth while, then, to inquire what is covered by this term, what are the signs by which God will recognize a man as a man, what are therefore the qualities we should seek to cultivate in ourselves that we may recognize in our own souls that which God demands of us as men.

It might very well have turned out that the man Jeremiah was searching for was a woman. The sex idea, which is strong in the words re-



ferred to above, is not implied in the analysis of manliness which follows in the story we are considering. The difference between men and women is real and important, but it is not the difference here emphasized. It is not the difference between manliness and womanliness which makes men's clubs reek with tobacco smoke and rattle with pool balls, while women's clubs are fragrant with "Mary Garden," and quiet with the noiseless movements of the "Bridge" cards. It is the lack of true manliness and true womanliness in both cases. That women outnumber men in the churches is not so bad for the churches as it is for the men. It is due to the same causes which make women's clubs organizations to promote mental culture and civic improvement, while men's clubs, to so large a degree, are organizations to encourage idleness and promote mental and spiritual degeneracy. A man is not a man in the sense of Jeremiah's search warrant because he happened to be born a male; neither can a woman claim exemption from this selective draft because she happened to be born a female.

The essentials of manliness, according to the

search-warrant which Jeremiah carried, are two: "if there be any that doeth justly and that seeketh truth." Doubtless true manliness is a very complex quality, and a full analysis would yield many more particulars; but a study of these two with some of their obvious implications will be sufficient for the present occasion.

A man is one who doeth justly. Justice has a twofold operation, but there is a strong tendency to limit our thought of it to one, and that the less important of the two. We think of justice more frequently as that which condemns evil. More important is that operation by which justice approves what is good. In both directions a man may be said to be just or unjust: as he condemns or fails to condemn, and as he approves or fails to approve.

Furthermore justice has a three-fold direction; and here also men are apt to give undue emphasis to that which is of the least importance, if indeed there can be any less or more in this connection. We are all constantly called upon to think about justice toward our fellow men. A large part of our social machinery is designed to secure that, and we all pay our taxes to build court houses and employ

judges, clerks, jurymen, sheriffs, and constables; and then many of us pay out private fees to lawyers in order to secure external, legal justice between man and man. But as to the more important matters of justice toward ourselves and toward God, how is it? The fact is, that the nearer we come to ourselves and to God, the more difficult it is to secure justice. In a rough, imperfect way, to be sure, and yet with some approach toward satisfaction, our courts secure justice between neighbors; but what court shall compel a man to be really just to his wife and to his children? Most people are kind in these intimate relations, for natural affection and the easy good nature of the normal man sees to that; and perhaps some might say that in these relations kindness rather than justice should rule. It is easier to be kind than to be just, and kindness has its true function only when it rests upon a solid foundation of justice. Too many loving husbands keep their wives in a state of pecuniary dependence, which is absolutely unfair, and which in spite of all conceivable tenderness, is likely to lead to disaster. Fathers are generally kind to their children. Even when an occasional flash of

temper hurts the child with words that sting or blows that bruise, the tenderness and indulgence which are easy to the average man will soon heal the hurt, for children are naturally forgiving, and soon forget. How many parents reflect seriously, however, that children have rights that ought to be considered? How many reflect that the mere fact of bringing a child into the world places the parent under definite obligation to give that child its due. "Love is the fulfilling of the law"; and a merely legal justice is a wretched substitute for love; but real love begins with justice and from that secure fortress goes out on its adventures of kindness. To be just to those nearest and dearest is harder than to be kind; but it is essential, in order to make the kindness worth while.

When we come to deal with ourselves the difficulty is increased. It is a difficult act of the mind to consider oneself at all. If self-consciousness is the real distinction between man and the brute, as some say, it is one of the highest and also one of the most difficult acts of the soul. To detach oneself from oneself, so to speak, and as it were, to set that self off



and gaze upon it and see its faults and its virtues, and judge its deserts—how difficult that is; and that is why it is so hard for man to be just, to be fair to himself. It is hard both ways: hard to see one's faults fairly, hard to see one's virtues, one's capabilities, one's obligations fairly. It is so easy for men to "compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to." It is just as easy to approve the qualities that come easy to us, and to overlook if not condemn those which go against our grain.

The trouble with the soul that does not accept the Christ life as its own life is injustice to itself in both ways. It does not face its own defect. It will not acknowledge its own need of that forgiving grace of God which is the special gift of Christ. The man who will not receive the Christ ideal as his in effect says that he does not need what Christ offers. He is not sick; so does not need the good physician; he is not guilty, so does not need pardon. No human being can honestly take this attitude and be fair to himself. It is the baby plea, "I did not mean to," or "I aint any worse than the others." Any human being who is



fair to himself will recognize and confess his need of healing and forgiveness. Until he is thus fair to himself Christ's "Come unto me" will have no appeal to him.

The soul that does not accept the Christ ideal is unjust to itself in another way. It treats itself as unfit for the higher experiences. It condemns itself to the lower levels of materialism. It says in effect, perhaps in a spirit of humility, but even so unjustly: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof." The depreciation of oneself which keeps many a man on the level of sensual pleasure, material achievement, worldly gain, is injustice to the soul which might be dwelling in the atmosphere of spiritual joys and laying up treasure in heaven. The rich fool of the parable was a fool when he said to his soul "Thou hast much goods laid up in store, eat, drink and be merry," not only because he should in the course of nature soon have to leave those stored up goods, but more because he was unjust to his soul in supposing it could feed upon such goods, when in truth it must have a higher food or perish. "So is everyone," said Jesus, "who is not rich toward God."

A man owes it to himself to feed his higher nature with the spiritual food it must have unless it shall perish; if he denies his soul this higher nourishment he is in the deepest sense unjust to himself.

And he is thus unjust to himself because he is unjust toward God. Our relation to God realizes itself externally in our relation to self and to fellow man. We find God in our souls and in the souls of men. This, however, remains somewhat confused, entangled with our selfish hopes, ambitions, pleasures, or our personal likes, dislikes, and prejudices. It becomes personalized in a manner that can be disentangled from these limiting and confusing associations only in Christ. As we find our relations to Jesus to be, so we may infer are our relations to God. If we treat Christ fairly we may believe that we are treating God fairly; and this is the final and determining condition of a thoroughly manly character. It is fair to fellow man, it is fair to self; but above all, and as a necessary condition to the others, it is fair to God in Christ. One never gets a real notion of one's own appearance until he comes before a mirror and sees himself there

reflected. So we shall never realize our injustice to ourselves; our weak allowance of our imperfections and our sins, our cruel refusal of the higher and better gifts we might receive, until we bring ourselves face to face with Christ, the mirror of a perfect humanity because the revelation of God in man.

I suppose every generous soul sometimes feels a warm glow of indignation as he thinks of the treatment Christ received on earth. Men scorn and hate Judas who betrayed him. Men wonder at Peter who denied him. Men are very bitter against Herod and Pilate because of the travesty of justice at their courts, and hate the Sanhedrin for their evident determination to hound him to death, under the forms of a judicial trial. Yet, I believe, all the scenes of that dreadful experience are in a very real sense repeated in the treatment men mete out to Jesus today. Still the self-seeking nominal disciple cries "Hail Master," and with the kiss of pretended love betrays him to his enemies. Still the loving but weak follower trembles before the silly ridicule of the world, and denies him. Still the powers that be, ordained of God to do justice, turn their

strength against Christ's poor, and favor the world of greed and power. Still, in the person of his humble followers, the Christ is scourged, scorned, spat upon, crucified. Still, in his own person, in his own divine, gracious tenderness and love, he exposes himself to man's injustice and is condemned.

It is a question which faces every man, which every manly man should face and answer if he would preserve his manliness: what have you done, what shall you do with Jesus? The man who is not a Christian, in the accepted meaning of the term, one who is not an avowed follower of Jesus Christ, framing his life plan according to that of Jesus, owes it to his manhood as he owes it to God to face and answer the question: why? In my judgment there can be but one answer; and that is: he has not dealt fairly, justly, with the Christ. Some excuse, no real reason worthy of a man, has prevented his giving Christ the love and service that are his due.

Conscience asks, "what thinkest thou of Christ?" Often the answer is, "I think Deacon Jones or church-member Smith is a very mean sort of man, and I think I do not wish to join



the church he belongs to." Christ says: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; and the heart answered "Well! I try to do about right, and I do not know that I have anything special to repent of more than others." Christ says: "Behold I stand at the door and knock"; and the heart says: "Well, Master, stand awhile longer or go away and come back when I am in a mood to attend to you; I really am too busy playing in the dirt, now." Christ says: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Men say: "what beautiful words, worthy of illumination and of repetition in all the perfection of poetry; but as for me I do not understand some doctrines which some Christians have considered important, and I can not come until I do." The last message of the risen Christ from heaven to earth is: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"; and men have answered: "I can not take it, till I am changed, and I must wait till the Spirit of God changes me." These are not imagined answers, but the actual phrases and words heard during a few years of pastoral



experience. They are simply not fair. They are one and all avoidance of the issue. They do not, in manly fashion meet and squarely settle the issue between the soul and Christ. They are all like Pilate, washing his hands, and yet delivering the blameless prisoner into the hands of the cruel mob.

We wonder, as we read the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, that there were none brave enough to stand for him. We ask ourselves: were there no men there to be true to their friend, and by one brave word or deed to turn the tide and save him from the cross, or at least die with him? Were they not ashamed to live on, and he upon the cross? It is really a stranger thing that now, in the light that nineteen centuries of Christianity have poured upon the character of Jesus, men still hold aloof. It is because they are not fair to themselves or to him, because they do not justly.

In a deeper analysis, it is because they do not seek the truth. Implied in the idea of justice is the love of truth. The two can hardly be distinguished. Doing justice is the outward manifestation of the spirit that is supremely truth-seeking. The most illuminating word

Jesus ever used about himself was that word to Pilate: "To this end have I been born and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"; and Pilate at once classified himself among those who do not hear his voice, when he answered with the sceptic's sneer, "What is truth?", and straightway went out to the crowd to act the lie, which was his nature, and deliver the innocent to the fate of the guilty. To seek the truth, and to do the justice which is the external manifestation of that truth is to be a man; and when the soul is brought face to face with the revelation of truth in Jesus Christ, to be a truth seeker and a justice doer, that is to be a man, is to be a Christian.

At different times, in my life, I have heard lawyers address juries. The one address of that kind which made a lasting impression on my mind and will never be forgotten ran something like this: "Be men! Forget your prejudices! Forget whether you are Democrats or Republicans; whether you are prohibitionists or high license advocates; forget your sectarian differences; remember only that you are

men! Think like men; decide like men; and I am not afraid to leave the verdict with you." I think the Lord Christ says to you: "Be men. Forget prejudice, selfish aims and hopes, ambitions, pleasures; just be men, and you can not fail to be Christian."

When Pilate brought Jesus out to the crowd, perhaps with the futile weak desire that some change in the mood of the crowd might save him from the consequences of his unmanly, cowardly injustice, he said "Behold the man!" Probably he meant little by this spectacular performance; but unconsciously he uttered one of the great words of history. Jesus is the man of men, and every true man belongs with him. Henceforth, since Jesus has thus been brought before the consciences of mankind, to be a man in the full meaning of the word is to be a Christian.

“O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

— PSALM XCVI-9.

## THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE

A phrase that occurs more than once in the Psalms is "The Beauty of Holiness." It binds together two conceptions or ideals of living which belong together, but have been too often separated and even made to antagonize each other. Beauty has always been sought and loved by man; always there have been elect spirits who have striven to realize the ideal of holiness; but too often beauty has been unholy and holiness has been unbeautiful.

The Greeks dreamed of beauty as no other people have dreamed of it; they uttered their dream in the perfection of their art. They did not in the same degree dream of holiness; and we do not look in Greek life for examples of saintliness. Severity, order, purity of intellectual ideal, and certainty in the relation of ideas one to another characterize Greek art and Greek life. They hated crudity, deformity, the unbeautiful; but we do not find with them the compelling impulse to a spiritual



ideal. We are not won by the Greek to bring our lives into relation to the absolute purity of the divine.

On the other hand, the early Christian sought for holiness with little thought for beauty. Rather, it seems that to him in a large degree the beautiful was incompatible with holiness. The conception of the Christ that we find in the earliest Christian art repels us by its harsh ugliness. This ugliness of the Christ, developed from the words of the prophet: "his face was marred more than any man," "there was no beauty that we should desire him," was reflected in the ugliness of much of the early Christian living. To the cultured pagan Christianity seemed an unlovely thing. It had revolted from the cloying sweetness of the pagan ideal, and it chose rather the bitterness of a life of self-renunciation; not the hypocritical "entsagen" of Goethe, which was a sentimental cloak for self-indulgence, but real renunciation of pleasure and beauty, gladly made for the sake of winning the crown of righteousness. Paul's words, "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage," with other passages of similar im-

port, were interpreted to teach an asceticism which, in many cases cut off all the brightness, all the sweetness, all the beauty of life. The ideal of that period and type of Christian living is seen in St. Simeon Stylites, the wretched, filthy, bony, naked form, standing or kneeling for year after year upon his lofty pillar, hoping by this utter sacrifice of all that brightens life, to win the prize of sainthood.

But the beauty of the pagan world made conquest of the asceticism of Christianity. As the Christian church climbed to the throne of the Cæsars, it lost much of its spirit of self-denial, and took in exchange something of the spirit of pagan beauty. With power and wealth came the possibility of costly art. The church built majestic basilicas, and great cathedrals which rivalled the Grecian temples in perfection and far surpassed them in variety of beauty. It clothed its priests in brilliant robes. It developed a majestic ritual, and made the arches of its temples echo with lovely music. With this development of beauty, through the later ancient period and the whole medieval church life, went hand in hand moral and spiritual corruption; and the culmination

of the movement which made beauty the servant of religion is coincident with the lowest depths of moral degradation that the Christian church ever reached. When Rafael and Michael Angelo were serving the church, the Medici and the Borgia were its rulers, and the sale of indulgences was rousing Martin Luther to his great protest.

So with the coming of a purer day of Christian living, with a new ideal of holiness in the puritan and the mystic of the earlier Protestantism, beauty almost disappears from the Christian consciousness. The preaching of the burly monk Luther is attended by the queer often unlovely art of the German school. Lucas Cranach and Albert Dürer are true, realistic, and the latter profoundly thoughtful and suggestive, but without a trace of sensuous beauty. The fierce puritan who broke into fragments the statues of English cathedrals and covered fair frescoes with whitewash was rudely repeating the early Christian protest against what was felt to be an unholy beauty. The bare walls and glaring windows and discordant anthems of our early New England churches came from the negative protesting phase of a

strenuous endeavor for purity, for righteousness, for holiness, by those who felt that the ideal could be reached only by turning wholly away from the corrupt and corrupting beauty of the past. .

We are now in the early stages of a new movement of the religious life toward the beautiful. In our church architecture, in our church services, notably in our music, we are seeking, in these days, to express our devotion and our desire for righteousness in forms that shall charm our senses. Are we then tending toward a neo-paganism in our church life? Are we in danger of yielding to the fascination of sensuous beauty, in form, in color, in language, in sound, and losing the zest of our search for holiness? Or can we guard the movement, so that we shall regain the beauty of the Greek ideal, and of the ancient and medieval ritual and religious art, and yet not lose the strenuous endeavor for the highest spiritual achievement which was the glory of the Christian in the age of persecution and asceticism, and of the puritan and the mystic in the age of reformation?

Such a conserving of the highest Christian



ideal, while we reach toward a fitting expression of that ideal in beautiful form, and learn to utter it in beautiful words wedded to beautiful music, should be possible. For the ideal of the Bible is not beauty without holiness or holiness without beauty; but the beauty of holiness. Nor did Jesus depart from this ideal when he came to give us the fulfillment of the law. He consciously, deliberately, and for our sakes, turned away from the ideal of asceticism as exemplified in the life and the teaching of John the Baptist, toward fulness of living. He graced the wedding feast with his presence. He mingled in the social pleasures of his time. He used his miraculous powers to open the blind eyes, to straighten the crooked and the withered limbs, to take away the horror of leprosy and restore the beauty of health. That passage in Isaiah which he declared to be fulfilled in his mission, has besides the promises of blessing which he cited, this: "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He bade us consider the lilies and love the beauty of their raiment, with which, he said, God had clothed them.

True, he bore the bitter contradiction and



persecution of men, and died in the agony of the cross; but the glory of the resurrection followed the shame of the crucifixion. The brightness and the beauty of Easter are as essential an element of true Christian experience as the sadness of Good Friday.

Jesus knew how in his own life to realize the ideal of the psalmist. In that wonderful life and in the words which fell from his lips, we see what the old Hebrew singer meant by the "Beauty of Holiness." True, he said that if any man would come after him, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow him; but just as true is it that in the last words of his last interview with his disciples before his agony he said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The last message of his earthly life comes not from the shadow of the cross, but from the sweetness of that dewy morning by the lakeside, when he taught Peter the lesson of love; and from the glory of that day on the mountain when he bade the disciples go out in the assurance of his continued presence with them, and make disciples of all the world.

No. In spite of the historic conflict between

beauty and holiness, there should be no such conflict in the present. We may safely seek for beauty in our worship if we keep the worship pure. We may rejoice in the beauty of lovely words and lovely sounds, if we do not lose the spiritual content of the words and the spiritual uplift of the sounds. God made the world good, and God made us to live in this good world. Then beauty should be the servant of holiness, and holiness should clothe itself in the garment of beauty. If we remember the words of Jesus and deny ourselves daily in his service, we need not fear to rejoice in the beauty with which the world is full. The beauty of the stars, the flowers, the sunset sky, is simply the right working of the laws of nature. We delight in this manifestation of the rightness of natural law and natural processes, and we call it beautiful. Holiness is simply the right working of the law of God in the spiritual life of man. Then the beauty of the flower, the sky, the star, is the holiness of nature; and the holiness of a consecrated life is the beauty of the soul.



“Behold, that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink and to enjoy good in all his labor, wherein he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life, which God hath given him: for this is his portion.”

— ECCLESIASTES V-18.

## THE COMMONPLACE LIFE

One of the most baffling books in the Bible, not to say in all literature, is Ecclesiastes. So difficult has it seemed to the average reader of Christian faith that he has limited himself to the poem on old age and the exhortation to "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" and let the rest go, as, to make the best of it, incomprehensible. A recent student of the book, however, Professor Genung of Amherst, has pointed out that it has a positive and, for our time, a most wholesome teaching in its substance and main course of thought, as well as in its poetical conclusion. To examine and develop the truth contained in this suggestion will make plain to a thoughtful reader that Ecclesiastes contains a strong, if sometimes bitter medicine for some of the worst illnesses of life, and lays a firm foundation for a most wholesome philosophy of conduct.

The negative portion of the book, (and it is this which strikes coldest upon the enthu-



siasms of our age and seems in strongest contrast to the usual positiveness of the Bible teaching) points out the unsatisfactory nature of those ambitions which have engaged the hopes, plans, and endeavors of men who have been most conspicuous in the world. The lessons are old enough and so constantly repeated by all moralists that they have largely lost their effectiveness though nobody attempts to deny them. Luxurious living never gave real satisfaction; we all know this, and yet we almost all try to secure all the luxury within our reach. Great learning never gave satisfaction to its possessor: all men know this, yet some of the finest natures in every generation give themselves to its attainment with an unquenchable fire of zeal. We can easily apply the lesson to all those aims: power, fame, wealth, and the rest, whose attainment in greater or less degree marks a few as distinguished from their fellows. Universal experience says Amen to the Preacher's word: "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." So far as real satisfaction is concerned all these possessions which distinguish men from one another are at last "vanity and a striving after wind." One hardly needs

to be reminded of the wearying circles of time and chance; of the certainty of death and the uncertainty when it may end our earthly toils, of the hopeless destiny which shuts off so many lives from such attainments. At the best, at the most successful, these things by which men seek for distinction give no satisfaction to the soul. Luxury, fame, power, wealth, by universal testimony of those who have gained them, are vanity. If this were all of the book it would be unanswerable and would well deserve to be set aside from our serious consideration as hopelessly pessimistic.

This is not all of the book, however. Six times, at turning points in his discussion, the Preacher repeats in substance his main thesis; that the real satisfaction of life is found in two things: bread and work. "Behold that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labor, wherein he laboureth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion." This is as full a statement of the thesis as any, but one needs to consider them all to get the full thought of the writer. In the days of Roman

decadence, the cheap politician thought to satisfy the people with "bread and circuses." Note the difference between this ideal and the "bread and work" of the Preacher. This is not the pseudo-Epicurean motto which Paul quoted only to repudiate: "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die"; for that left out the idea of work, and what is more important yet left out the idea of God. To the Preacher, life is God given, and the power to enjoy one's daily bread and one's labour arises from the consciousness that they too are God given. These two considerations lift the message of the Preacher out of the mire of materialism and the cloud of pessimism. Never of these does he say "vanity of vanities." "Go thy way," he says, "eat thy bread with joy"; but he does not fail to add: "for God hath already accepted thy works."

Now this matter of eating and drinking is a very commonplace affair, and perhaps may therefore seem hardly worthy of such serious treatment. But consider! It is an affair of interest to all those common people of whom the wise Lincoln said that God must love them because he has made so many of them. In no

other one function could the final object of all political and social action be so well summed up as in that of food. It is an often quoted and seldom disputed saying, whether or not it originated with Napoleon, that every army marches upon its stomach. Owen Meredith's famous lines put the matter strongly, yet are not far from the truth:

“We may live without poetry, music  
and art;  
We may live without conscience and  
live without heart;  
We may live without friends; we may  
live without books;  
But civilized man cannot live without  
cooks.”

One of the lessons of the world war which will not soon be forgotten is the primal necessity of food. If a nation can be fed it will make shift to defend itself, to clothe itself, to live; but if the food supply fail everything fails with it. Society rests upon agriculture. The farmer is the ultimate man. These are commonplaces, undisputed, everywhere accepted. What is not everywhere accepted, however, is that the



higher satisfactions of life are found right here in this commonplace matter of our food. The industry, the enterprise, the invention of all the world, find their chief result in the spreading of the breakfast and the supper tables of the world. The central idea of that word so rich in sacred associations, which more than all other words carries in itself the most precious values of life, the word home: the central idea of this word is expressed when the family gather about the table where their daily meal is served. Whether it be the palace of the King, the house of the ordinary man, the hut or the tenement of the poor, the tent or the outdoor fire of the gypsy: where the daily bread is served, there is the home. When your friend would show you that he loves you he asks you to eat with him in his home. When a highly honored guest is to be most highly honored you provide a feast of some kind, you ask him to break bread with those whose companionship would most honor him. The ideal of a rightly constituted society is realized when there is daily bread for every one. The luxury of the very rich is "vanity and striving after wing"; but the simple abundance of whole-



some food for the whole people is the ultimate goal of all social reform. When every honest man can be sure that there is food enough for him and those dependent on him, every day of their life, then the nation may be at peace; for all the blessings of peace and prosperity come with this.

Not to be separated from this matter of our daily bread is the question of labor. The two go together. It has already been suggested that the ultimate purpose of industry and enterprise and invention is the provision of man's necessary food. This is unmistakable when we consider the activity of the individual. In any large view of human life it must be recognized that what men labor for is their daily bread. That is what wages mean. Labor difficulties, strikes, and the constant struggle between capital and labor all come back ultimately to this. If the wage is plainly sufficient to provide the necessary living there is peace, industrial peace. If the margin is too narrow; if the laborer can hardly if at all provide for his dependents, there is trouble and there ought to be trouble. Man's instinct is to work. The normal, healthy man will work,

whether or not there is an absolute necessity in his individual case for the wage in order to provide his food. But such cases of independence, as we call it, which are rather cases of dependence upon ancestors who have left a surplus of labor to their children, are happily rare. Most work in this world has a very definite relation to food, and can hardly be separated from it in our thought. The beautiful picture of nature in the 104th Psalm shows us how "the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God"; but "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening."

The fatal fault in our modern industrial civilization is that it does not provide work for every industrious man. The recurring periods of unemployment are the symptom of a deadly social disease. When our economists have found the cause and cure for this they will have accomplished their mission; when society has removed that cause and accomplished that cure, the Kingdom of God will be indeed at hand. When that has been achieved, it will not be long, even if it has not already come as the necessary accompaniment of the other, till

the nature and the conditions of men's work will have been so modified that every man may really rejoice in his work; not simply in the fact that he has work, nor in the wages that the work brings, but in the work itself. This is the ideal of the Preacher, that man may "enjoy good in his labor." When that has been made possible; when there shall be a job for every man who is willing to work, a long step will be taken toward that reconstruction of society which every serious minded and well informed person feels to be imperative.

A long step, but not the whole way; for it must be possible for the average man to "enjoy good in his labor." Shorter hours, that the work may not utterly exhaust, but the spirit remain fresh and ready for the task; conditions of safety, wholesome air and light, such surroundings as will keep the working hours free from deadening weariness, and soul and body destroying disease; such redistribution of tasks and modification of the practice of division of labor, so that there will always be left enough of interest in the work itself for the enjoyment, the zest in his task which should be possible for every worker.

These general conditions may seem better adapted to the class room than to the pulpit, and of course they are to be worked out in detail by the economist, the legislator, the leaders in organized labor and the captains of industry. There is, however, implied in them a lesson for the individual in the commonplace life of his every day which a little thought will make plain. The common man and the uncommon alike are to find satisfaction in the common pleasures and the common occupations of life. Not the luxuries of the table, but the plain bread and meat of the average man give the real satisfaction of life. Not the midnight orgies of the wretched rich, with their sure retribution of disease and death, physical and spiritual, but the home table, the picnic lunch, the simple meal of the group of friends who eat to live, rather than live to eat, are what tend to lasting satisfactions. Drunkenness and gluttony, or to use more polite phrases, the bracers and appetite stimulants of society, these are what the Preacher calls "vanity and striving after wind." The wholesome food, taken with good appetite, seasoned with pleasant social intercourse, accompanied



perhaps with fragrant flowers and happy song, these are among the most substantial satisfactions that life can give. They are consecrated by the example and constant practice of our Savior. It is really extraordinary, how large a place in his short life is taken by the simple pleasures of the table. On the lake shore with his disciples; twice bidding the great multitude share the simple luncheon with him; at Matthew's home, with Simon the Pharisee, in the upper room with his chosen followers, in the loved home of his friends, Mary and Martha and Lazarus. You can trace the progress of his wonderful life by these occasions when he joined with others in the commonplace pleasures of the table. Make then, your daily bread sacred. Keep the sweet old custom of inviting your God and your Savior to join you in your breakfast, your dinner and your supper. Guard your life from excess in these commonplace matters of every day, and make them always sweet with love and savory with happy fellowship, and you will have traveled far on the way to the ideal life.

And even so with your daily task, your commonplace work. Envy not the man who is



called to do what are called the great tasks, to render the sort of service which makes men conspicuous, famous in the world. One and all they will tell you that the reward of such distinction is like dust and ashes in the mouth. Burke pauses in one of his great political addresses to say—"What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue!" The most popular President of recent times said "I like my job." But I think he would have told you if he had spoken out his heart, that the fame, the pay, the publicity, were one and all "vanity and a striving after wind." So you may find satisfaction in your job. Learn to like it. Make it such that you can like it. The larger part of your waking hours must be spent with your job. If your life is a happy life, there must its happiness be largely found. Companionship, merriment, music, art; all these and many other such things may come in to give needed variety and freshness. But as soon as they usurp the place of the real work of life, the curse falls. They pall upon the spirit, "Vanity of vanities" is the word. But the day's task need never so pall. This you may do with the solid satisfaction of knowing that it is your work, which no

other in earth or heaven can do as well as you. You may hitch your wagon, or in modern phrase your Ford to a star. The chariot of old days or the limousine of today has no such harness in its equipment. This is no recent idea. It is old as Eden. When God said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," he pronounced no curse upon man, as we have mistakenly assumed. The story tells us he cursed the earth for man's sake; which may mean that briers and thorns and difficulties that make it hard to wring a living from the soil were better for man than the comparative ease of the simple life of Eden. At any rate, whether this is a fair interpretation of that part of the Eden story or not, it is true always that work is man's best blessing, that no curse is so deadly as the curse of idleness, and that the right way toward satisfaction in life is the way that seeks to provide the opportunity for work to every man and to make the nature and the conditions of every man's work such that he can honestly say that he enjoys the good in his labor which is God's gift. The secret lies in that last phrase. When we can without pretense, in honest conviction feel that our work

is God given we can take solid and enduring satisfaction in it. George Herbert, the dear old "metaphysical" poet of the seventeenth century, put the thought into quaint and perfect poetry when he wrote:

"A servant, with this clause,  
Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws  
Makes that and the action fine."

And the little English maid-servant who thought she had been converted in the great Mr. Spurgeon's church put exactly the same idea into her own natural language: "Why do you think you are converted?" asked the preacher: "I sweeps in the corners and under the bed now," answered the girl. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians when inclined to be busy-bodies and idlers, "that with quietness they work and eat their own bread," and so sums up in few and commonplace words a perfect ideal of life social and individual.

It is not strange then, but quite what should be expected, that some of the most sacred and searching spiritual teachings of the Master use the analogy of work and bread. In no word of his is there a higher claim for the es-

sential unity of his being with that of God than when he said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; and nowhere does he state the relation of the believing soul to him in deeper phrase than when he said: "I am the bread of life," or when, to the Samaritan woman, by the well, he declared: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." It is by a very true instinct that the Christian church has seized upon that sacred moment of the last supper when he gave the broken bread and the cup to his chosen friends as symbols of his body and blood consecrated to the world's salvation, and has made the commonplace supper the central mystery of the faith; though of equal significance is that other symbolic action of the same occasion when he washed his disciples' feet, and so declared the function of those who would do as he did to be the commonplace form of common work. There are two clear voices which speak in the midst of the confused and confusing sounds of the mystic book of Revelation: one when the veil of the unseen world is lifted and we are told of the blessed



dead who die in the Lord, that "their works do follow them" and that "they serve Him day and night in his temple"; the other when the Master says that if the soul of man shall heed his knocking and open the door: "I will come in and sup with him and he with me." Of all the incidents of that strange time between the resurrection and his final separation from the earth, none is more sacred and suggestive than that of the interview in the early morning on the lake shore. Last of earthly deeds recorded of the Master was that homely, commonplace deed, gathering the dry sticks together, kindling the fire on the beach, preparing the fish and setting them to broil, that the hungry, weary fishermen might not have to wait for their breakfast when they should come in from their night of toil. With our daily bread thus consecrated by the Redeemer's presence and loving care, we may with good hope and full assurance carry into our daily work the consciousness of that same sacred presence and care, and in all the commonplace details of every day, live and work in the light divine. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."





“Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee, and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

— LUKE XII-20-21.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also.”

— MATTHEW VI-20-21.

“Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

— EPHESIANS III-8.

## THE LIFE OF GREAT POSSESSIONS

In Browning's "Instans Tyrannus," the tyrant tells how all the force of his unlimited power was brought to bear upon one poor and hated wretch, who was struck to earth, beaten into helplessness, the energy of spite exhausted on him—and then:

"I looked, from my labour content,  
To enjoy the event;  
When sudden—how think ye, the end?  
Did I say "without friend?"  
Say rather, from marge to blue marge,  
The whole sky grew his targe,  
With the sun's self for visible boss,  
While an arm ran across  
Which the earth heaved beneath, like a  
    breast  
Where the wretch was safe pressed.  
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,  
The man sprang to his feet,

Stood erect, caught at God's skirts and  
prayed.

—So I was afraid.”

Nature and nature's God at the service of the man who prays. All things his. This, in substance, is what Paul says about you who pray, in that exultant cry at the end of the third chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. It should be written as free verse, for it is of the essence of the highest, purest poetry:

For all things are yours,  
Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas,  
Or the world, or life, or death,  
Or things present or things to come,  
All are yours:  
And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

My thesis, then, is this wonderful assertion: that to the soul of the man who prays; in other words who lives the “Godly” life, to whom God is a real and active presence and power; who daily, hourly “practices the presence of God”; to such a being all history, all forces of the present, all tendencies and revelations of the future, all are tributary; they are all his; for he is Christ's, and Christ is God's. Mar-

velous truth, if it be indeed a truth; man the object of God's loving care, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas fellow workers with God for him; this mighty universe rolling on its pathless way, and releasing its majestic powers, for him; the great complex of forces we call the world, the unsolved mystery we call life, the dread summoner Death, every event and circumstance of the present, and every new experience of the untried future, all these "working together for good" to the man who loves God. Was there ever an optimism like this? If this can be made real to our apprehension, all the wealth of all the multimillionaires sinks into absolute insignificance in comparison.

"Paul, Apollos, and Cephas." The names are typical of what the past means, what it has done for us. Paul the prophet, the mystic, the revealer of unknown or unconsidered phases of the eternal truth, who made Christianity a world faith instead of a Jewish sect; Apollos the eloquent expounder of the Scriptures, the scholar, the historian; Cephas, Peter, the organizer, the constitution maker, the conservative, the ruler. The three stand for all that the past gives us. The explorer, the progres-



sive thinker, the inventor, all that phase of the contribution of the past to the present may be included under Paul. The labor of all the scholars and investigators who have opened the sealed books of nature and of life, who have accumulated the material of fact and known event on which the Pauls have based their excursions into the unknown and their revelations of the true, all these may be counted under Apollos. The empire organizers and conquerors, the nation builders, the creators of law, of codes and constitutions and creeds, all these may be thought of as followers of Cephas. These all include what man has done for man, what history has left for life, what humanity has to show for its centuries of weary journeying, of toil and travail, of blood and iron, of suffering and death. All this is yours. You are not to be enslaved by the past; but to make the past your slave. You are not blindly to follow the prophet or the seer, not even Paul. He is yours; you are not his. If his vision speaks to your soul make it your vision. All this wondrous past is for you to make your own and use for your good.

How? Well, first by knowing it. That is

one phase of education, or what Arnold called "culture." To know the best that has been thought and done in the world. Very foolish is the idea that this is all of education; but more foolish yet is the idea that this can be ignored. You can not know it all, you say? In one sense this is true. No one can master all the details of what has been done. In another and far more important sense you can know it. You can be intelligent about it. The great contribution of the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman to the world's stock of ideas may be familiar to you. The great names of the leaders, the teachers, the law givers, the martyrs, may be in your minds and hearts. No soul need be in ignorance.

But whether known or not, the work, the suffering, the achievement of the past has been for you. You unconsciously walk the roads they have builded. You inevitably breathe the atmosphere their thoughts and prayers have invigorated; you inherit the wealth they gathered and left. You are "heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time." The point is that these gifts of the past are for you to use, not to use you. Your ancestors have given you

certain traits, moral, intellectual, physical. If they are good traits, that is creditable to the ancestors, but it is simply an asset, an opportunity, for you. On the foundation of this inherited personality, you are to build a character, and work out a life. It is yours, to use. If these traits are bad, that is to the discredit of the ancestors, but it need not make you the slave of their evil habits or disposition. These too are yours. You do not belong to them. They are to be corrected, developed in right directions, the good possibilities hidden under them to be discovered, dragged out to the light, made active forces in your character building. You will not be held responsible for them, but will be held to strict reckoning as to what you did with them. So with all that the past has contributed to your life. Your nation, your church, your creed, the revelation of the Christ that has come to you. You belong to none of these. These all are to be your possessions, and the test question of your life is to be what you have done with these great possessions. What sort of an American are you? What are you doing with your Americanism? What sort of a Christian are you? What are

you doing with your inherited Christianity? What use are you making of your creed, the creed to which you were born? Are you making your spirit a slave to that creed? Reciting its words when your soul denies its spirit? You could not make a worse use of it than that. On the other hand are you spitting on the creed for which your ancestors gave their lives, by which your Godly father shaped his good life, and on which your loving mother founded her tender ministration? Then you do a base and foolish thing. Use the faith of your fathers. Make it yours. Reverently change it so that it may serve your life. It is yours.

So, as to the vast complexity of events, forces, personalities which we call the present; you are not to be its slave, it is to be your possession. It is just as unworthy of a man to be the blind slave of the spirit of the time, as to be a hide-bound adherent of the past. The new creed is not necessarily any better than the old. The old, at least, has the sanction of experience. The new can not yet be tested by the one sure test of its fruits. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," may apply to the present as well as to the past. The wealth of the pres-



ent is in a true sense yours, though its legal title may be in very different names. It is in Hawthorne's "Our Old Home" that he tells of seeing a little boy in one of the great ducal residences of England; and when told that he was the owner of the place, wondering in what sense it could be said that he who evidently could not in the least appreciate that great historic property really owned it. Did it not in a more true sense belong to the intelligent stranger who knew its history, who could appreciate and enjoy the books in its library, the pictures in its gallery? The legal owners of such great possessions have been known to sell the books and pictures in order to pay gambling debts. Did such persons ever really own them? No, things present like things past are really the possessions of those who can appreciate, who can use, who can control them.

The life of the present, individual, social, national, world-wide, is yours, in the sense that you are responsible for its right on-going. No one of us can disclaim responsibility for the world war. Collectively, if not individually, we have done our part in bringing it on. Individually, without any qualification, we have



our part to do in bringing it to the ending which we believe is in accordance with the will of God. It is yours, in the double sense of responsibility and opportunity. We thought at first that it was Germany's and France's war. Then we learned that it was England's war, and that brought it nearer to us. Then we learned that America had something to do with it; but many of us inclined to say in our hearts: it concerns the people of the Atlantic Coast, but not us in the Central States. Then, a little later, we learned that it was America's war, just as really as England's or France's. Then many of us kept holding it away from ourselves, saying in our hearts, it is the President's war, we hope he will win it; or it belongs to Congress to see that the necessary legislation is passed, to win this war; or it is a matter of the navy and the army, of anybody and everybody but just ourselves. As, one after another, our associates and companions were swept into its resistless current, and went to the training camps, or to various forms of home land service, or across the sea to "somewhere in France," gradually we came to see that it is our war. We can not escape the re-

sponsibility; we can not be blind to the opportunity. This greatest event of history, this tremendous storm of human endeavor and struggle, intimately concerns us all. It is ours. It touches us in our business life, in our social life, in our home life. It will be won or lost, not only according as the strategists plan its campaigns, or the soldiers fight its battles, or the navies guard the seas; but according as you and I eat our daily meals, invest our little savings, do our little daily tasks, speak our words of criticism or of encouragement, contribute our share of depression or of cheer, of selfishness or of devotion, to the atmosphere which the souls of men and women around us must breathe. I read somewhere that after the battle of the Marne, some one asked Kitchener how he accounted for the outcome of that miraculous event, and he answered in substance, "Some one must have been praying." If there is nothing else that we can do, we can pray. It is our war, and it is for us, by all that we can give and do, and at last and always by prayer, to win the war.

For it is true that not only the past and the present are ours, but the future also. "Things

present, and things to come." This is true of our individual life. Jesus was announcing a universal principle when he said, "Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Disappointments and surprises come to make us doubt; but in spite of all such exceptions it remains the rule that what we on the whole desire and work for is the measure of our attainment. In the oldest of English poems, overshadowed as it is by the old pagan notion of a resistless "Weird" or destiny, the writer pauses in the story to say "sometimes with the help of God, the brave man may overcome Weird." As man frees himself from the bands of ignorance and more and more learns the secret of a real trust in God, the "sometimes" passes into always, and he learns at last to say with Paul: "We know that, to them that love God, all things work together for good." Our future is our own, to make or mar as we will. Whatever may be the surprises, the losses, the troubles, the disappointments, the difficulties we meet, they are all ours. We are not the slaves or the helpless victims of any or all of them. They are the material of life. Out of them we are

to fashion such a life as we will. Even of our mistakes a wise teacher has said: "He is not greatest who makes the fewest mistakes, but he who best overcomes his mistakes. Organize victory out of mistakes." What you shall be, whether brave and pure and true, or timid, stained and false, is after all far more important than what may happen to you. You may not be able to control the happenings, but you have absolute control of that more vital matter, what you shall do with those happenings, how you shall meet them and deal with them. What you shall be in the future years and through all eternity rests absolutely with you. Things to come are yours.

All very fine in theory, I think I hear some one objecting, but how shall any one make these fine phrases stand for realities in our individual lives? As men are seen in the actual experiences of the world they appear to be the victims of their heredity or their environment. They often seem to be shut in to a certain course and quality of life as if within iron bars. They seem so, yes; but that was not a great philosopher or thinker, who in the seventeenth century wrote the unforgettable words: "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a



cage." Thinking to write a pretty love song, he left one of the great messages of Literature:

"If I have freedom in my love  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty."

What we are determines what we really have. The greatest conceivable material wealth leaves the ignorant boor still a wretched pauper as to spiritual riches. No imaginable degree of material poverty can make the true child of God other than rich toward God. If we were asked to name the two souls who had the greatest real wealth of all men in history I think we might well name Socrates and Jesus. We know nothing and care nothing about the land or the money that may have been in the name of Socrates; and we know that Jesus had not where to lay his head, and that all the wealth his murderers could divide was his seamless robe. We know too that the wealth of all the Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Rothschilds of the world could not buy the riches of Christ's possessions.

"All things are yours—for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." The practical realiza-



tion of all that has been said is found here. Would we make it actual of our lives that we are possessors of the infinite wealth of the past, the present and the future, of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, of life and of death? The way is simple if not easy. Make it true that you are Christ's as Christ is God's. The way to possession is surrender. The man who would possess money surrenders his life to money. The man who would possess any art or any field of learning or any type of great achievement surrenders himself to that form of activity. The soul that would have the great possessions, that would be in very truth "heir of all the ages," "heir of God," must be "joint heir with Christ"; must surrender his life to the Christ life so that the Christ life may be his. Then all this will be true of him. He will have received the gift which Christ says he came to give. Possessed of the unspeakable gift, his commonplace life will be beautiful, manly, bright with heavenly visions, calm with the assurance that it is the reasonable life, and abundant with all the fullness of God.

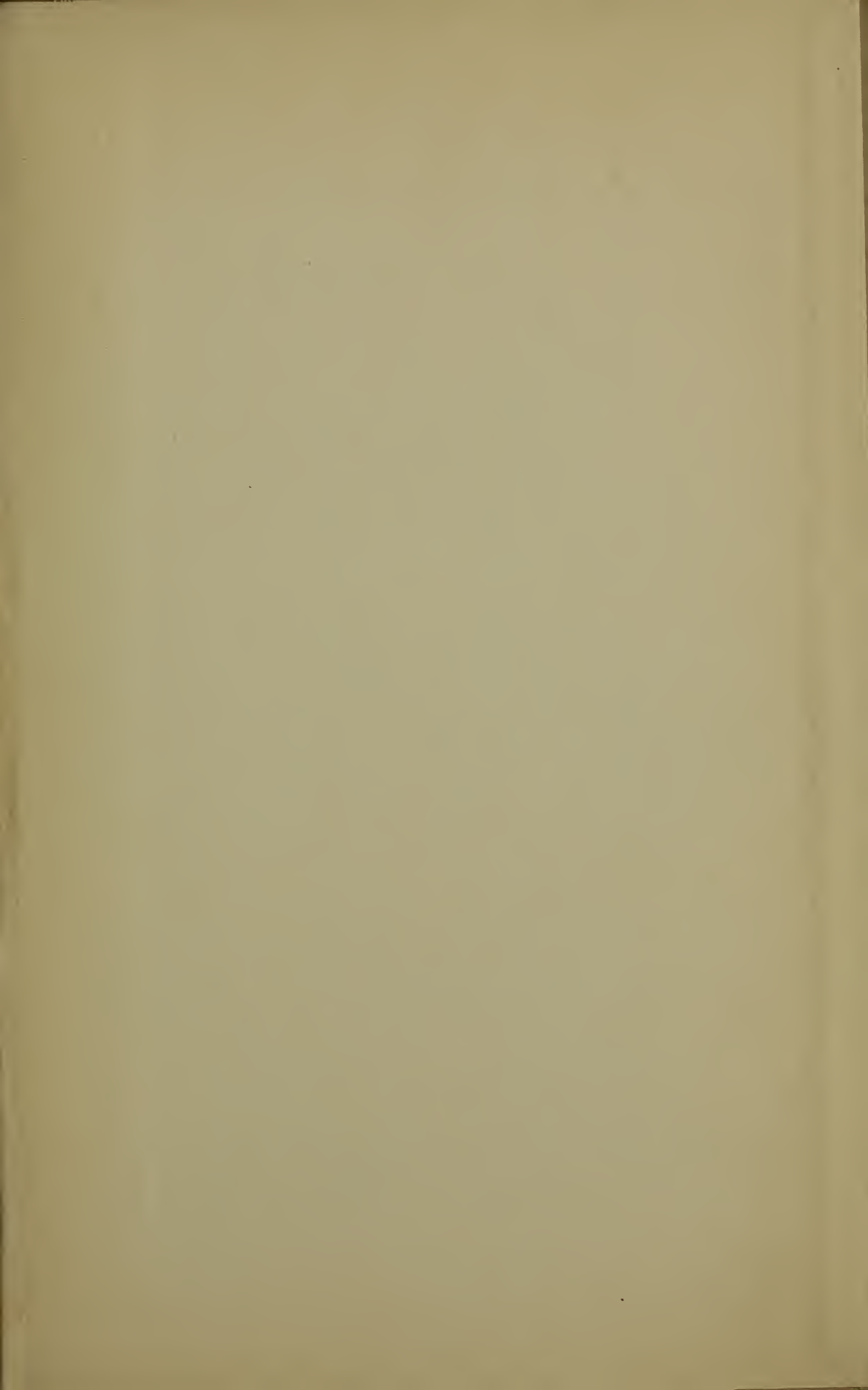
THE END.



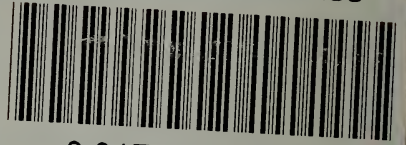
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